



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Representative Town Meeting

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Wednesday, April 11, 2018

7:30 PM

Groton Senior Center

REGULAR MEETING

Moderator Ebbin called the meeting to order at 7:37 pm.

A. ROLL CALL

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher called the roll and announced that 34 members were present. A quorum was declared by Moderator Ebbin.

Members Present: Moderator Ebbin, Rep. Adams, Rep. Bailey, Rep. Bordelon, Rep. Casper, Rep. Chase, Rep. Doyle, Rep. Frickman, Rep. Kotowski, Rep. Hanscom, Rep. Marshall, Rep. Martin, Rep. Massett, Rep. McDermott, Rep. Mello Miller, Rep. Melendez, Rep. Merritt, Rep. Monaghan, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Oliver, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. Perry, Rep. Powers, Rep. Quinn, Rep. Richards, Rep. Rogers, Rep. Stanford, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Strode, Rep. Washington, Rep. Welles, Rep. Whitehouse and Rep. Whitney

Members Absent: Rep. Bauer, Rep. Brayman, Rep. Cini, Rep. Gustavson, Rep. Marley and Rep. Wagner

Also present were Town Manager John Burt, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Michael Graner, Director of Public Works Gary Schneider, Public Work Project Manager Rick Norris, Director of Parks and Recreation Mark Berry, and Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher.

B. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The members observed a moment of silence and Rep. Martin led the Salute to the Flag.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 14, 2018

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Monaghan, seconded by Rep. Adams. The motion to approve the minutes carried unanimously.

D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

None.

E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

Moderator Ebbin reported that Reps. Bauer, Cini, Gustavson, and Wagner had informed her of their absences.

F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER

1. Financial report

Town Manager John Burt reported that the Fund Balance as of March 31, 2018 was approximately \$8.9 million, which is 7.4% of the FYE 2018 General Fund Adjusted Budget. Mr. Burt reported that the General Contingency budget for FYE 2018 was appropriated at \$650,000 with a current balance of \$279,325. He reported that the Capital Reserve Fund balance as of March 31, 2018 was estimated at \$1.1 million with two supplemental appropriations approved and one pending approval from the RTM.

2. Monthly briefing

Town Manager John Burt distributed the Town Manager's News referencing additional information from this document. He introduced Public Works Project Manager Rick Norris to give a briefing on the School 2020 Plan.

In response to Rep. Bordelon, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Graner explained that the new

consolidated middle school will have a band room for classes and the ability to use the cafeteria for any and all school band practices. He explained that the band room will be located adjacent to the cafeteria with a removable wall.

In response to Rep. Bordelon, Mr. Norris stated that every precaution will be taken during the renovation process to ensure that all hazardous materials are safely removed from the two current middle schools.

In response to Rep. Chase, Arcadis design consultant Jack Butkus stated that there are times when a town begins to design a project while it waits for the grant commitment from the state. There could be a situation where the State cuts the grant programs and funding would be pushed forward to another legislative session. He stated that Groton has grant commitment letters from the State that obligates them to support the projects at the dollar values that have been approved by the Legislature and at the reimbursement rates for the eligible costs that were stated in those grants.

In response to Rep. Massett, Mr. Burt stated that the Council of Governments is in the process of creating a study for community cost sharing. He stated that the City and Town have been involved with looking at Human Resources, IT Services, Parks and Recreation, Finance, and Public Works in order to investigate any cost savings in shared services. COG is looking at the data to see where or if different communities could work together and share some cost savings. He will plan to prepare reports for future meetings.

In response to Rep. Bordelon, Mr. Burt will suggest that we include information regarding our school system in the TIF program portfolio.

G. REPORT ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

None.

H. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Graner stated that the Board of Education approved the FYE 2019 budget which had a 2.4% increase. The Town Council approved a budget that reflected the minimum budget requirement. He stated that this would be the same budget as the current year, \$76,468,239. He referenced information provided in a handout (attached to the minutes). He explained the confusion regarding personnel, stating that there are two types of paraprofessionals, and a reduction in administration and teaching staff. He stated that the Board of Education plans to have a far more in-depth budget book for the next budget cycle. He reported that the two current middle schools will be converted into magnet schools. He reported on the lottery that will be used for enrollment and the two schools. He reported on a meeting with U.S. Representative Joe Courtney regarding the Impact Aid grant. He stated that there is a proposal to provide a voucher to parents of military dependents that could be used to attend private schools. He stated that the money for the voucher would come out the Impact Aid grant. He stated that the Impact Aid grant is about \$3.5 million a year and that this would be reduced. He reported that he wrote a letter to the Congressman explaining the impact on revenue for the Town.

Dr. Graner stated that a committee will be naming the two themes for the magnet schools. He stated that the school at the Cutler site will be the diversity school and is required to be a themed magnet school. He stated that the Westside magnet school will also have a theme.

In response to Moderator Ebbin, Dr. Graner stated that in order to get to the minimum budget, the Board of Education will have to cut \$1.8 million. He stated that he, Mr. Burt, and the Finance Director came up with three avenues for reductions: reducing the health insurance fund, reducing the additional funding for retirees, and to use part of the Department of Defense grant.

In response to Rep. McDermott, Dr. Graner stated that we have 4300 resident students and we pay

tuition for 5000. He stated that the ratio of student to teacher has been 10-to-one for about the last fifteen years. He stated that as the student population has decreased, so has the staff. He stated that our student/teacher ratio is similar to towns in our area. He stated that our special education student population has significantly increased. He stated that 22% of our budget is for special education.

In response to Rep. Newsome, Dr. Graner stated that there are 146 non military children living in Balfour Beatty. He stated that Congressman Courtney has consistently supported Town efforts to try to get fair funding. He stated that for every military dependent child living in Balfour Beatty, the Town receives \$3,500 reimburse through Impact Aid, for civilian children we receive \$185.

In response to Rep. Whitehouse, Dr. Graner stated that it costs about \$15,000 a year to educate a student in Groton. Rep. Whitehouse stated that Balfour Beatty is market rate housing that does not pay property tax to the Town.

In response to Rep. Whitney, Dr. Graner stated that they are trying to use the lottery system to even out the student population between the two middle schools. He stated that classroom sizes will be about 20 students per teacher.

Rep. Bordelon reported that she had a positive meeting with Dr. Graner and others and that she is looking forward to the new format for the Board of Education budget book next year. She reported that there will be a resource room for 504 students support at the high school starting next year. She stated that not all children identified in our special education programs have a critical physical disability and that it is important that we support and fund our remedial programs. She reported that the baseball field at Cutler needs resurfacing or seeding as well as the football field at the High School.

I. LIAISON REPORTS

The following Liaison Reports were given and are on file:

Economic Development - Rep. Whitehouse

Town Council - Rep. Kotowski

Board of Education - Rep. Bordelon

Golf Advisory Board - Rep. Welles

Moderator Ebbin noted that all reports were excellent and she thanked the Representatives for their contribution. Ms. Ebbin asked for additional volunteers to assist with the Town Council and the Board of Education.

Members Present: Moderator Ebbin, Rep. Adams, Rep. Bailey, Rep. Bordelon, Rep. Casper, Rep. Chase, Rep. Frickman, Rep. Kotowski, Rep. Hanscom, Rep. Marshall, Rep. Martin, Rep. Massett, Rep. McDermott, Rep. Mello Miller, Rep. Melendez, Rep. Merritt, Rep. Monaghan, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Oliver, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. Perry, Rep. Powers, Rep. Quinn, Rep. Richards, Rep. Rogers, Rep. Stanford, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Strobe, Rep. Washington, Rep. Welles, Rep. Whitehouse and Rep. Whitney
Members Absent: Rep. Bauer, Rep. Brayman, Rep. Cini, Rep. Doyle, Rep. Gustavson, Rep. Marley and Rep. Wagner

J. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. FINANCE - Chairman Washington

Chair Washington read the minutes from the January 10, 2018 Finance Committee meeting into the record. She noted that this report was an expanded version of the report that she gave in January. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Chair Washington and seconded by Rep. Monaghan. The motion carried unanimously.

2018-0025

Supplemental Appropriation for Crystal Lake Road Reconstruction Project

THE FIRST SUPPLEMENTAL PROJECT AGREEMENT FOR CRYSTAL LAKE ROAD
RECONSTRUCTION

WHEREAS, the Town Manager has received the First Supplemental Project Authorization Letter from the State Department of Transportation for the Reconstruction of Crystal Lake Road, and

WHEREAS, the State has now estimated the total construction cost to be \$6,249,260, and

WHEREAS, the demand deposit required from the Town is now \$616,621, and

WHEREAS, the demand deposit previously made by the Town was \$500,500, and

WHEREAS, the balance of the demand deposit required from the Town is \$116,121, and

WHEREAS, the Finance Director has determined that there are sufficient funds in the fund balance of the Capital Reserve Fund, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that a supplemental appropriation of \$116,121 be made from the Capital Reserve Fund Balance for a new FYE 18 capital project, Reconstruction of Crystal Lake Road #5504F and the Town Council authorizes the Town Manager to sign the First Supplemental Project Authorization Letter upon approval of the supplemental appropriation by the RTM.

A motion was made by Rep. Washington, seconded by Rep. Streeter, that this matter be Adopted.

Chair Washington read the minutes from the April 4, 2018 Finance Committee meeting into the record. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Chair Washington and seconded by Rep. Powers. The motion carried unanimously.

In response to Rep. Newsome, Public Works Director Gary Schneider stated that the project had been estimated by the State Department of Transportation within the Construction Office. He stated that the estimates made were based on some soil borings and some test pits. He stated that environmental tests were completed for the entire road where a dry cleaning business and a couple of gas stations were located. He stated that the probes that were put in those areas came up clean. He stated that when the construction started, it was one boulder after another. He stated that the overage in the estimates are for rock and contaminated soil removal. He stated that the extra \$116,000 from the Town will pay 10% and the State will pay 10% and the Federal Government paid the other 80%. He stated that the amount of rock was unknown and the extent of the soil contamination. Mr. Schneider reported that the construction is underway and that they are currently working on a 8 to 10 foot bikeway.

In response to Moderator Ebbin, Mr. Schneider stated that since this estimate was completed after most of the rock work and excavations were done, there shouldn't be any additional funds needed. He stated that we won't know for sure until the final audit is complete.

The motion carried unanimously

Members discussed the proper procedure for taking up an item that had not been referred to committee. It was decided by consensus that the body would need to suspend Rule 6.5.3 in order to discuss the next two items that were on the agenda.

Suspension of Rule 6.5.3

Rep. Massett made a motion to suspend Rule 6.5.3, seconded by Rep. Casper. The motion carried by a vote of thirty in favor and two abstention, Reps. Kotowski and Whitney abstained.

2018-0068

**Supplemental Appropriation from Capital Reserve for Library/Senior Center Variable
Message Display Sign**

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION FROM THE CAPITAL
RESERVE FUND

“Variable Message Display” with anticipated funding from fundraising and grants, and

WHEREAS, the Town has estimated the total construction cost to be \$26,800, and

WHEREAS, the Groton Parks Foundation has \$7,355 for this project from Senior Center and Library fundraisers, and

WHEREAS, the Town has been awarded a \$20,000 reimbursable grant from the Office of Emergency Management for this project which will be returned to the Capital Reserve fund, and

WHEREAS, the Finance Director has determined that there are sufficient funds in the fund balance of the Capital Reserve, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that a supplemental appropriation of \$20,000 be made from the Capital Reserve Fund's fund balance for FYE 2018 Capital Project 4) I) Variable Message Display.

Refer to RTM under Rule 6.5.3.

A motion was made by Rep. Washington, seconded by Rep. Massett, that this matter be Adopted.

Rep. Bordelon stated that this is an example of improving our Town and that she is in favor of this expenditure.

Rep. Mello Miller stated that she is familiar with this project and added that the twenty-thousand dollar grant will be reimbursed within sixty days. She stated that this sign will enable silver alerts, alerts for child-abduction, road conditions, etc. She stated that this will be a highly visible sign. She listed several other examples of advertisement uses. In response, the Parks & Recreation Director stated that the funds will last depending on the occurrence of maintenance issues. He reported that they have received additional funds and grants. The Groton Parks Foundation will be responsible for allocations of funds. He stated that the Special Revenue Fund would be responsible for anything beyond the Foundation funds. He stated that no Town funds will be needed.

In response to Rep. Richards, Mr. Berry stated that the reason that this item was put into the fast-track is because there is a deadline by which the money must be allocated in order for the grant to be awarded. He stated that there would be time to wait for approval at the next RTM meeting, but that the bid process would need to get underway. He stated that if the RTM failed to adopt this item at the next meeting, the project would have to be halted.

Rep. Marshall stated that the motion is to approve this item now so there is enough of a cushion in order to allow the project to move forward and the grant can be repaid.

Rep. Massett made a Point of Order stating the suspension of the rules must be discussed and the implications noted. Moderator Ebbin denied the motion because Rep. Marshall's question relates to the project, not the suspension of rules.

Rep. Marshall stated that if the vote does not succeed then the project is not funded. Mr. Berry confirmed that if the RTM chose not to recognize the need for the appropriation, the project would be significantly short and we would not be able to purchase the sign.

Chair Washington stated that the Town will appropriate the \$20,000 and the Parks and Recreation Department will put that money right back into the Reserve Fund after they receive the grant.

The motion carried unanimously

Suspension of Rule 6.5.3

Rep. Monaghan made a motion to suspend Rule 6.5.3 in order to take up item 2018-0077,

seconded by Rep. Whitehouse. The motion carried twenty-six in favor, six opposed, and zero abstentions. Reps. Bailey, Newsome, Whitney, Kotowski, Quinn, and Richards voting no.

Members Present: Moderator Ebbin, Rep. Bailey, Rep. Bordelon, Rep. Casper, Rep. Chase, Rep. Frickman, Rep. Kotowski, Rep. Hanscom, Rep. Marshall, Rep. Martin, Rep. Massett, Rep. McDermott, Rep. Mello Miller, Rep. Melendez, Rep. Merritt, Rep. Monaghan, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Oliver, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. Perry, Rep. Powers, Rep. Quinn, Rep. Richards, Rep. Rogers, Rep. Stanford, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Strode, Rep. Washington, Rep. Welles, Rep. Whitehouse and Rep. Whitney
Members Absent: Rep. Adams, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Brayman, Rep. Cini, Rep. Doyle, Rep. Gustavson, Rep. Marley and Rep. Wagner

2018-0077

Town-City Highway Analysis

RESOLUTION FOR FYE 2018 GENERAL CONTINGENCY TRANSFER FOR TOWN-CITY HIGHWAY ANALYSIS

WHEREAS, The Town Charter provides for General Contingency transfers during the year, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council desires conducting a comparative analysis of the City and Town Highway operations, and

WHEREAS, the Town Manager and City Mayor have agreed that the comparative analysis will be funded at 50% each, and

WHEREAS, the Town and City have selected a consulting firm to conduct such analysis and the estimated cost is \$70,000, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council authorizes a transfer of \$35,000 from the General Fund Contingency, Account 10741 5499 to the Public Works account, 10350 5290 for 50% of the cost of the comparative analysis of the City and Town Highway operations and authorizes the Town Manager to enter into a contract for such analysis.

Refer to RTM under Rule 6.5.3.

A motion was made by Rep. Washington, seconded by Rep. McDermott, that this matter be Adopted.

In response to Rep. Bordelon, Town Manager Burt stated that the arbiter recommended that the Town and City have an analysis conducted in order to identify common benchmarks.

In response to Rep Frickman, Town Manager Burt stated that this analysis cannot be done in house.

In response to Rep. Powers, Mr. Burt stated that the Town received four bids for the arbiter. He stated that the arbiter recommended that this study be completed.

Rep. McDermott stated that there has been a bad feeling on the highway situation for a few years and that led to this problem. He stated that he has discussed this situation with the City and the Town. He stated that this will put us on the path toward solving the problem. He stated that the arbiter declared insufficient information to determine a ruling in favor of the Town. He stated that he isn't in favor of doing the study, but it has to be done. He referenced the \$60,000 Police Study that produced recommendations that were never followed.

As a follow up to Rep. McDermott, Mr. Burt stated that it is too difficult to determine what to expect from this study. He stated that the process may be long. He stated that there is a chance that the project could be stopped if it is determined invalid. He stated that we are looking for efficiencies and an over-all comparison to normal standards for operation and our common benchmark functionality. He stated that he cannot comment on City or Town Council actions.

Rep. McDermott stated that it would be good to have an agreement that if the Town is better at

doing something, they do it, and if the City is better at doing something, they do it. He stated that each organization has their own operating efficiencies. Mr. Burt stated that he is in favor of cost-sharing.

In response to Rep. Mello-Miller, Mr. Schneider stated that the first question to decide is what is the making and repairing of roads. He described definitions as anything between the property lines as street, trees, lighting, concrete curbs, asphalt curbs, sidewalks, pavement, pavement markings, as comparative analysis of the City and Town highway operations. He stated that some Public Works departments maintain rail road tracks. He stated that he has been with the Town for thirty-four years and within his memory, there has been five studies conducted within his department. He stated that there had been three comparative analysis. He explained the process that the arbiter will use to develop the analysis. He stated that the past studies will be reviewed by the arbiter.

In response to Rep Kotowski, Mr. Schneider confirmed that the study will conduct a comparable analysis of the departments. Mr. Burt stated that the study will include a way to account for the traffic density caused by Pfizer and Electric Boat.

In response to Rep. Chase's question as to why the to bodies can't sit down and figure this out, Mr. Burt stated that this hasn't happened in the past. He stated that this study will be more sophisticated than what has been done in the past. He expects to bring in someone with broader experience to help the Councils to come to a consensus on what the benchmarks are and then study it.

In response to Rep. Whitehouse, Mr. Schneider explained the history of the Public Act that enacted legislation for the making and repair of the roads in the City of Groton. He also explained the steps taken by the all parties up to this point in time.

Rep. Monaghan clarified that the arbitration is over and this is the recommendation from the arbitration. He asked how much money the arbitration cost. Mr. Schneider stated that no data was available. Mr. Monaghan stated that the Police Study identified a problem that we hoped would be cleared up in the future. He stated that the highway issue is an ongoing eighty-five year fight. He stated that the idea is that spending this money will help resolve the issue. He stated that it makes sense to spend the money, even in a tight year.

Rep. Welles stated that there is interest in subcontracting paving. He asked if subcontracting would add any values to these functions. Mr. Schneider stated that this could be considered.

Rep. Streeter stated that there has been conflict since 1903, but that in the last ten years it has bubbled to the surface and gone to arbitration. He announced that he lives in the City. He stated that the issue has always been that the City roads need more attention than the Town roads. He stated that the Town has gone to arbitration twice and lost twice, which equates to about \$60,000. He stated that by approving this study, we won't go to arbitration this year or next year. He recommended going forward with the study.

Rep. Newsome stated that if he thought this study would solve the problem, he would vote for it. He explained his opinion. He stated that he will vote against this because there needs to be a better description of what we are spending \$70,000 on. He stated that the proposal is extremely vague. Mr. Burt stated that this point is well taken. He stated that there had been earlier studies, but this is the first time that it is a joint study with three people from Town and three people from the City. He explained that one of the early steps is to identify the common benchmarks. He stated that this has never been accomplished before. He stated that we may not get beyond this point or not agree. In which case, the Town and City would not be bound to pay the \$70,000. He stated that they will be moving forward in stages. He stated that this process has dragged on and the bid

has expired, but that the consultant has agreed to honor the bid.

Rep. Pasquilini concurs with Rep. Newsome and stated that he would like the findings to be binding between both the Town and the City. He stated that if the recommendation saves money, then we should do it and not dismiss it because we didn't like the outcome.

Rep. Frickman asked if the funding could be set-up to fund the benchmarks and then come back and ask for extra funds. Mr. Burt and Mr. Schneider explained the process of payments.

Rep. Bordenlon speculated that if the study is funded and the Town and City still do not agree, they could still go to arbitration. In response, Mr. Schneider stated that Mumford Cove is a private Association and their roads are not Town roads. They are responsible for the upkeep of their roads. Groton Long Point is like a condo association and is not included in the study. Groton Long Point repairs their roads by contract. The Town does the resurfacing and they contract out some of their other work to private contractors.

Rep. Massett stated that as part of the process, would it be possible to have a definite completion time. Mr. Burt stated that there is a four month completions date expected, but we need to be flexible in case we cause delays.

Rep. Marshall restated the responsibility of the RTM with this matter. In response, Ms. Moukawsher suggest that any communication may be sent to the Town Manager. Mr. Burt stated that he can provide monthly progress reports.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 25 - Moderator Ebbin, Rep. Bordelon, Rep. Casper, Rep. Hanscom, Rep. Marshall, Rep. Martin, Rep. Massett, Rep. McDermott, Rep. Mello Miller, Rep. Melendez, Rep. Merritt, Rep. Monaghan, Rep. Oliver, Rep. Perry, Rep. Powers, Rep. Richards, Rep. Rogers, Rep. Stanford, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Strobe, Rep. Washington, Rep. Welles, Rep. Whitehouse and Rep. Whitney
Opposed: 6 - Rep. Bailey, Rep. Chase, Rep. Frickman, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Pasqualini Jr. and Rep. Quinn
Abstain: 1 - Rep. Kotowski

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES -Chairman Oliver

No meeting, no report.

3. EDUCATION - Chairman Whitney

No meeting, no report.

4. RECREATION - Chairman Mello Miller

No meeting, no report.

5. PUBLIC SAFETY - Chairman J. Streeter

No meeting, no report.

6. PUBLIC WORKS - Chairman Newsome

No meeting, no report.

7. RULES & PROCEDURES - Chairman Richards

K. BUDGET DISCUSSIONS

Not discussed.

L. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

M. ADJOURNMENT

Rep. Mello-Miller made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Rep. Bailey. Moderator Ebbin called for a vote, which was carried with thirty-one in favor and one opposed, Rep. Kotowski.

Adjournment was noted at 10:36 pm.

Attest:

*Betsy Moukawsher
Groton Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM*